

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

(1) DEPARTMENT Behavioral Health	(2) MEETING DATE 4/23/2013	(3) CONTACT/PHONE Jeff Hamm, Health Agency Director, 781-4719	
(4) SUBJECT Request to hire Mary Garrett, N.P., to a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner position at step 5 of the salary range.			
(5) RECOMMENDED ACTION It is recommended that the Board approve hiring Mary Garrett, N.P., to a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner position at step 5 of the salary range.			
(6) FUNDING SOURCE(S) Medi-Cal, Realignment	(7) CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT \$152,760.00	(8) ANNUAL FINANCIAL IMPACT \$152,760.00	(9) BUDGETED? Yes
(10) AGENDA PLACEMENT { X } Consent { } Presentation { } Hearing (Time Est. ____) { } Board Business (Time Est. ____)			
(11) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS { } Resolutions { } Contracts { } Ordinances { X } N/A			
(12) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR) N/A		(13) BUDGET ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED? BAR ID Number: N/A { } 4/5th's Vote Required { X } N/A	
(14) LOCATION MAP No	(15) BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT? No	(16) AGENDA ITEM HISTORY { X } N/A Date: _____	
(17) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW Reviewed by Leslie Brown			
(18) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S) All Districts -			

County of San Luis Obispo



TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Behavioral Health / Jeff Hamm, Health Agency Director, 781-4719

DATE: 4/23/2013

SUBJECT: Request to hire Mary Garrett, N.P., to a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner position at step 5 of the salary range.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board approve hiring Mary Garrett, N.P., to a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner position at step 5 of the salary range.

DISCUSSION

The Behavioral Health Department delivers both inpatient and outpatient mental health treatment services to many County residents. Services are provided by a mix of professional, technical and support positions, including contract, locum tenens, and Staff Psychiatrists. Until early in the 2009-10 fiscal year, the department had not employed a Nurse Practitioner in Mental Health. In that year's budget process, the department converted some Staff Psychiatrist hours to create a new Nurse Practitioner position as a way to meet our mental health treatment obligations in a slightly more cost effective manner. We were initially able to fill the position quickly. During the budget development process for FY 2012-13, we created a new job class titled Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, in part to recognize that duties performed by Nurse Practitioners in the mental health field were substantially different from those performed by Nurse Practitioners in the physical health field. Shortly thereafter, the employee holding the position resigned to pursue career alternative elsewhere.

Since that time, and through two separate recruitment efforts, the department has been unsuccessful in its effort to fill the vacant position. During that time it has been necessary for the department to employ much more expensive (and transient) locum tenens Psychiatrists to perform the work previously performed by the MH Nurse Practitioner. At present, the department has finally found a qualified candidate willing to accept the position, but not at less than the top step (step 5) of the salary range.

Currently, Section 2.48.060(b)(2) of the County Code specifies that only the Board may make appointments in non-management job classes at steps 4 or 5 of the salary range.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT

None.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Annual salary and benefit costs for a MH Nurse Practitioner position at step 5 of the salary range amounts to \$152,760, which is \$22,400 more than if the department were able to recruit a qualified individual willing to start at step 1. However, the department has been unable to fill the position for eight months, and is now only able to fill it at the top step of the salary range, causing the above comparison to be invalid. While the position has been vacant, the department has had to utilize the services of a locum tenens Psychiatrist, at a substantially higher rate of pay than the top step MH Nurse Practitioner. Therefore, a more valid picture of the financial considerations of the recommended action are a comparison

of the annual cost of the position at step 5, which is \$152,760, with the annual cost of a full time contract locum tenens Psychiatrist, which is approximately \$270,000. Filling the MH Nurse Practitioner position, even at top step, is the much more cost effective alternative available.

RESULTS

In light of the difficulty recruiting a qualified candidate for the subject Mental Health Nurse Practitioner position, the recommended action will allow the department to cost-effectively deliver critical mental health services to severely mentally ill individuals in our community. The effective delivery of mental health services to our patient population contributes to the Behavioral Health Department's efforts to achieve its mission, which contributes to the County's efforts to achieve our vision of a Safe and Healthy Community.